Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Challenging bullying and harassment:

Rights, respect, equality



School should be safe

School should be a place where you feel safe, respected and able to learn. Everyone has the right to be treated fairly. Bullying and harassment can make people feel hurt, unsafe, excluded or afraid. They can also stop young people from enjoying school, learning well and taking part in the things that matter to them.

Bullying and harassment are never acceptable. If they happen to you, it is not your fault. You have the right to ask for help, to be listened to, and to have what has happened taken seriously.

Your rights

- You have the right to be safe and protected from harm.
- You have the right to education.
- You have the right to be treated fairly and not be discriminated against.
- You have the right to say what you think about things that affect you, and for adults to take your views seriously.
- You have the right to information that helps you understand your rights and where to get support.
- You have the right to meet other people, join groups and take part in activities, as long as this respects the rights of others.



What bullying behaviour means

Bullying behaviour is usually behaviour by one person, or a group of people, that is meant to hurt someone physically or emotionally. It usually happens more than once and can make the person experiencing it feel they have little power to stop it.

Sometimes people fall out, argue or say unkind things. That can still be upsetting and should be taken seriously, but it may not always be bullying. Adults in school should listen carefully, find out what has happened and help everyone involved.

What harassment means

Harassment is unwanted behaviour that makes someone feel upset, frightened, humiliated or disrespected. It can be linked to who someone is, or who someone thinks they are. Harassment can happen face to face, in writing, through images, or online.

Types of bullying behaviour

Verbal bullying

- Name-calling
- Teasing
- Threats
- Insults
- Mocking someone or saying things meant to hurt them

Physical bullying

- Hitting
- Kicking
- Pushing
- Tripping
- Damaging someone's belongings
- Taking things from them
- Making someone do something they do not want to do

Emotional or social bullying

- Lying about someone
- Spreading false rumours or sharing information about them that should be private
- Leaving someone out on purpose, or ignoring someone
- Encouraging others not to be friends with them
- Trying to make someone feel alone

Online bullying

- Sending hurtful messages
- Sharing photos or videos without permission
- Leaving someone out of online groups
- Pretending to be someone else
- Spreading rumours online
- Making threats
- Misusing someone's personal information

Prejudice-related bullying and harassment

Prejudice-related bullying is bullying linked to negative ideas or unfair assumptions about someone. It can be about who they are, what they look like, what they believe, where they or their family are from, or who other people think they are.

Some children and young people may be more likely to experience bullying or harassment.

This can include learners who:

- are disabled, have additional learning needs or are neurodivergent
- are from minority ethnic communities
- are Gypsy, Roma or Traveller learners
- are refugees or asylum seekers
- speak a language at home or in their community that is not English or Welsh
- are young carers
- are care-experienced
- are lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans
- are questioning their identity
- follow a religion or belief, or do not follow a religion
- are treated unfairly because of poverty, family circumstances or appearance.

Bullying can also happen because of sexism, racism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, disablism, religious prejudice or other unfair attitudes. It is never acceptable.



What your school should do

Your school should work to prevent bullying and harassment from happening. It should help everyone understand how to treat others with respect. It should also have clear rules and a plan for what happens when bullying or harassment is reported.

Adults in school should listen to you, take what you say seriously, help keep you safe and explain what will happen next. They should investigate what has happened fairly and decide what action is needed. This should include support for the child or young person who has been harmed, as well as clear and appropriate action for the person responsible, in line with the school's behaviour policy.

Schools may use approaches that help people understand the harm caused, take responsibility and rebuild relationships where it is safe and appropriate to do so. However, this should not replace taking bullying seriously, dealing with it fairly, or taking action to prevent it from happening again.

If you, your parent or carer do not think the school has handled the bullying properly, you can ask the school to look at it again or make a complaint using the school's complaints process. If the bullying or harassment is by a teacher or another adult in school, you should still report it to a trusted adult, the headteacher or another senior member of staff. The school must take concerns about adults seriously and follow the right safeguarding, behaviour or staff procedures.

What you can do if bullying or harassment happens

Immediate response: keeping yourself safe

- If you can, move away from the situation and go towards a safe place or a trusted adult.
- Try not to respond in a way that could put you at risk or make the situation worse.
- If it is happening online, avoid replying if this could escalate things. You can mute, block or report the account if it is safe to do so, and move away from the device or conversation.
- If you feel unsafe, ask for help straight away.



Reporting, seeking help and keeping evidence

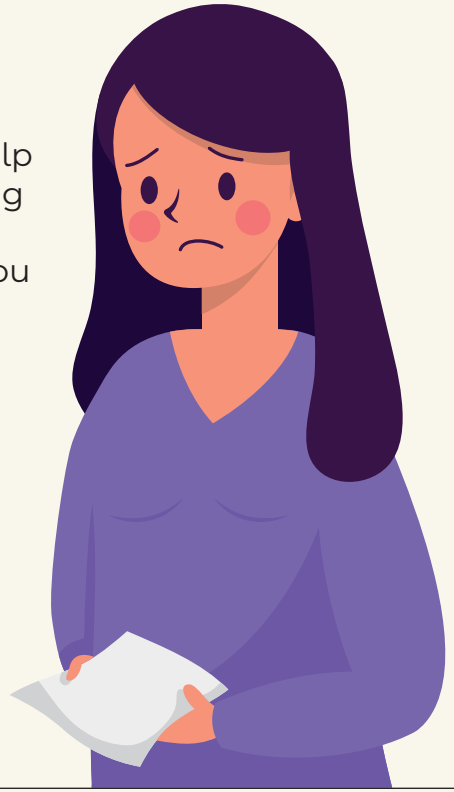
- Tell an adult you trust as soon as you can. This could be a parent, carer, teacher, teaching assistant, youth worker or another trusted adult.
- If you can, write down what happened, when it happened, where it happened and who was involved.
- If it happened online, keep evidence if it is safe to do so, such as screenshots or messages.
- Block or report online accounts where you can.
- Ask for help if you feel worried, unsafe or upset, even if you have already asked before.

If you have seen bullying or harassment happen

If you see bullying or harassment, you can help by telling a trusted adult. You do not have to deal with it on your own. If it is safe, you can be kind to the person affected, include them, and let them know they are not alone.

Getting support

If bullying is upsetting you, there are people who can help you deal with those feelings. You should tell someone in school first, such as a teacher, teaching assistant, head of year, wellbeing lead or another trusted adult. They can provide immediate emotional support and help you find further support if you need it, such as counselling or another service. There is counselling in school for Year 6 and above. Your council website may also have information about what else is available in your area. You can make an appointment or ask an adult you trust to help you find this information or make an appointment for you.



Remember

- You have the right to feel safe and respected.
- Bullying and harassment are not your fault.
- You do not have to cope on your own.
- It is okay to ask for help more than once.
- Adults should listen to you and take what has happened seriously.

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